

4476.f

VICTORY OVER SIN THE TRUE TRIUMPH
OF A CHRISTIAN.

A
SERMON,

PREACHED IN THE PARISH CHURCHES OF

UPPER *and* LOWER SWELL,

ON TUESDAY, DECEMBER 19, 1797:

BEING THE DAY APPOINTED, FOR A

GENERAL THANKSGIVING.

By The REV. WILLIAM WILTON, A. M.

RECTOR OF UPPER SWELL.

Evesham :

PRINTED AND SOLD BY J. AGG ; SOLD ALSO BY T.

N. LONGMAN LONDON, LOWE BIRMINGHAM,

AND HOUGH GLOUCESTER.

PRICE SIX-PENCE.

1798.

10 1799



ERRATA.

Page 19, line 27, for mighty, read mightiest.

TO THE READER.

THE following Discourse, preached to small Village Congregations, is now, with a few alterations, sent forth by its Author into the World; not under the idea of conveying any new discovery or new light to those, who may deign to notice and to read it, but from the pleasing hope of awaking the indolent to activity in his CHRISTIAN calling, and checking the sinner in his rash career, by reminding them both of truths, which they must have often heard before, though heard in vain; but which speak with such peculiar emphasis and commanding eloquence at this important crisis, that they can scarcely, it may be reasonably presumed, fail of producing at length the desired effect.

In

In Times of such "abounding iniquity," the Patriot's "Love" of his native Land, and the CHRISTIAN's "Love" of his REDEEMING LORD, should not be suffered to "wax cold." It should rather shine with greater splendour, and burn with a purer and a stronger flame. A false delicacy should not deter the feeblest voice from bearing its testimony against national Guilt; neither should the stern critic's frown awe the CHRISTIAN minister into silence, while he beholds with tender pity and a bleeding heart, his deluded countrymen rushing headlong to destruction, and involving their Country in their ruin.

To the LORD, as well as to the World, the Author commits this humble tribute of Love to both; fervently praying, that however the one may "despise and reject" it, it may by the other, not for any merits of its own, but for the sincerity with which it is offered, be accepted and approved.

A SERMON.

SERMON.

Pfalm, 144. X.

IT IS HE, THAT GIVETH SALVATION UNTO KINGS,
WHO DELIVERETH DAVID HIS SERVANT FROM THE
HURTFUL SWORD.

THE events, which have occasioned our meeting together within these hallowed walls this day, are of so public a nature, and of so recent a date; are so commonly known, and have been so generally celebrated in town and village by the accustomed demonstrations of national Joy, that words would be lost, and time be mispent, in recounting and describing them; in recounting and describing those various and illustrious Victories, which, year after year, have attended the British arms by sea, and given additional lustre and celebrity to our naval Fame.

Let those, who consider these public effusions of joy, as due to our country, to our defenders, to our King, remember, that there is a higher duty to be discharged, and a more solemn service to be paid, to our GOD. "It is HE that giveth salvation" and victory "unto Kings" — it is HE, who hath "delivered" OUR King, "HIS servant, from the hurtful sword." Therefore are we this day called together into HIS temple to render unto HIM our thanks and praise for HIS mercy to our sovereign, to our country, to ourselves. We are invited to rejoice before the LORD, not that we have slain thousands of our enemies, and drenched their ships with their blood — no — far be such a sentiment from the hearts of CHRISTIANS! far be such an offering from the temple of our GOD! No — happier, infinitely happier should we have been, if it had pleased the LORD to give us the victory without shedding one drop of hostile blood, without striking one single blow. The recollection of our slaughtered foes must needs imbitter our most joyous moments, and mix our "cup of thanksgiving" with tears. We rejoice not, then in THEIR DESTRUCTION, but in OUR DELIVERANCE — we rejoice, that, when one or the other was ordained to fall, WE, unworthy WE, were preserved alive. And surely, great cause have we for thanksgiving; great reason for gratitude and joy. For, what is the object of our enemies?

enemies? what is their avowed and acknowledged design? Hear the language of Sennacherib of old against Judea, and ye will hear theirs against us. The same are their daring views, the same their insolence, and their threats the same. "By the multitude of my chariots," said the proud Assyrian monarch, "will I come up to the height of thy mountains," O Judea, "to the sides of Lebanon; and I will cut down the tall cedars thereof and the choice fir-trees thereof;" I will "bind thy Princes with chains, and thy nobles and mighty men with fetters of iron." "I will enter into the heights of thy border, and the forest of thy Carmel;" I will take possession of the principal parts of thy dominions; Mount Sion shall be my prey; the plunder of Jerusalem shall reward my toil. I have marched through deserts, where my army expected to perish for thirst; yet even there "have I digged, and drunk water; and with the sole of my feet dried up all the rivers of besieged places," turning their streams into another channel, and causing my victorious soldiers to pass through as on dry land. Nothing hath been able to oppose my progress YET, neither shall any thing now be able to deliver my enemy out of my hand."

Thus vaunted Sennacherib of old: — and what faith FRANCE at the present day? "I will invade thee, O England, in spite of thy proud navy,

in spite of thy sea-girt shore. I will climb thy rocks, pour my unnumbered legions over all thy coasts, and penetrate to the very seat and centre of all thy pride and power. London shall be mine — there will I erect my tri-coloured banner, and destroy at a blow all those who have dared to raise the British flag against it. Thy Government shall fall — thy throne shall be overturned — titles and honours shall be no more. From thy Noble's breast I will tear the glittering star, snatch the mitre from thy Prelate's head, and pluck the coronet from thy Prince's brow. All thy boasted possessions and wealth, thy flocks, and herds, and various grain, the fruits of thy industry, and the produce of thy fertile fields, all, all will I seize for mine own use, and for the reward of my needy children." "To them, that have not shall abundance be given; and from him, whoever he be, that hath, shall the uttermost farthing be taken away." "Behold, thou hast heard what FRANCE hath done to all lands, by destroying them utterly; and shalt THOU be delivered? Where are the sovereigns of Germany and Spain, of Italy, Portugal, Sardinia and Holland? Have they not all either submitted to my sceptre and courted my alliance, or been stript of their honours, and driven from their thrones? Yes — and THOU, O England, shalt share the same fate. I, who have so easily subdued so many and so mighty Nations, wrought so

so many wonders in the earth, and astonished a trembling world by my victories, will as easily subdue and conquer THEE. On British soil will I humble British pride, and upon the banks of the Thames dictate laws and dispense liberties to an oppressed and enslaved people."

From such laws and such liberties may Englishmen ever be defended! the day, that would give them to us, would, in all probability, behold the downfall of our Constitution, the loss of our independence, the plunder of our property, the violation of female honour, the overthrow of our religion, the murder of thousands, and the assassination of our King! The peaceful husbandman would in an hour be stript of all, which the hard labour of many years had acquired; and the lowest peasant, who retained the smallest particle of affection for his sovereign, his religion, or his native land, would be compelled to give his slender pittance to the hungry soldier, or prepare to surrender, all which he possessed besides, his life! Under the name of liberty, we should be the most abject of slaves — slaves to republican despotism, and the insolence of a triumphant mob. The sun of England would set for-ever; and She, who has so long possessed the dominion of the seas, would perhaps become tributary to her enemy, and be brought into subjection to an usurped foreign power. Go, ask
in

in FRANCE, what horrors these revolutionizing ruffians have accomplished THERE; and then bethink yourselves whether, inveterate as is their enmity to England, and strong as is their thirst for our blood; urged on as they are by the most desperate circumstances at home, and animated by the most lively hopes of pillage and plunder HERE; they would deal more gently with us, and be more sparing of our treasures, our religion, our monarchy, or our lives. Their deeds in FRANCE, are written in blood: and in the same dreadful characters would their actions be recorded HERE also, if once they were permitted to succeed. But often as we have forsaken the LORD, the LORD hath not yet totally forsaken us, but still is pleased to fight on our side. Let the events, which this day is intended to commemorate, suffice to justify this assertion. Surely "it is the LORD's doing," that we have been so often preserved; that we have met, and fought, and conquered, a mighty enemy, at one time warring with nearly twice our number of ships and men; and again and again defeated their daring designs against this favoured land. Surely "it is the LORD, who hath given Salvation, and Victory unto our King" — surely "it is the LORD, who hath delivered HIS appointed servant from the" fierce invader's "sword."

Impressed with this conviction, our beloved Sovereign

vereign this day offers again to GOD in HIS temple the banners, which, torn from the enemy's hands, from GOD he has received; and calls on all his subjects to unite with him in humble praise and adoration of HIS and OUR MASTER in Heaven, the LORD GOD OMNIPOTENT, KING of KINGS and LORD of LORDS. The call we have obeyed — and from every quarter of the Kingdom the voice of praise and thanksgiving is ascending to the celestial throne. O! may it be heard with favour and acceptance there! that, through the prevailing INTERCESSION of our great HIGH PRIEST, the LORD may still be gracious to our land, and crown with future blessings our gratitude for the past! “The LORD is a man of war: the LORD JEHOVAH, the LORD ALMIGHTY is his name. If HE be for us, none can be against us:” but if HE be against us, our doom is fixed, and England's glory is no more. However, then, “some,” who know not GOD, may “put their trust in chariots, and some in horses, let us remember only the LORD our GOD;” that GOD, to whom it is not more easy to save with many than with a few; before whose single arm whole hosts shall be discomfited, and millions shall become weak and timid as one man; under whose banner a stripling David shall conquer a Goliath, and England, unassisted by any earthly power, shall vanquish all
her

her confederate foes. By HIM we have hitherto conquered; and, if still, through the arrogance and ambition of the enemy, the sword must be unsheathed, and the blood of friends and foes again must flow, by HIM we humbly hope to conquer still.

O! might we but gain one other VICTORY, that I could name, the peace and prosperity of our beloved Country would be insured; or, at least, her afflictions would be sanctified to her, and our distresses would work together for our good. Ye know little of the point, wherein our safety consists, if ye know not the VICTORY, to which I allude; VICTORY over the WORLD, the FLESH, and the DEVIL; VICTORY over all the powers of sin and darkness; VICTORY over DEATH and HELL! This is the true triumph of a CHRISTIAN: this is the VICTORY, whereunto he is called. Hence, the life of every true disciple of JESUS CHRIST is described in the scriptures as a state of perpetual warfare; he himself is denominated a foldier, and his whole employment is fighting. In baptism, when he gives up his name to CHRIST, he enlists under HIS banner, promises to fight all HIS battles, and acknowledges HIM "the" great "Captain of his salvation:" and he is therefore afterwards exhorted in the word of GOD, to "fight the good

good fight of faith, to endure hardness as a good foldier of CHRIST, to war a good warfare," and to endeavour to " please HIM, who hath chosen him " to so honourable a profession. SIN is the great enemy he hath to encounter; for, SIN is his Captain's greatest foe. 'Twas SIN, that brought the SON of GOD down from heaven, and nailed HIM to the cross; 'twas SIN that pierced HIS sacred side, and took away HIS precious life. 'Tis SIN, that, if not conquered, will drag us down also from heaven to hell; will " pierce us through with a thousand sorrows " in this world; plant our dying pillow with thorns, when we are departing out of it; and in the world to come plunge us into an eternity of woes.

O! think upon the sufferings, which our dear REDEEMING LORD endured for OUR sakes, and let our love take fire at the thought. Let a thankful sense of such transcendent mercy animate us in the conflict, which we are called to sustain with HIS and OUR adversaries, and induce us to devote our souls and bodies to HIS service for ever. What! do we think the warmest expressions of gratitude too cold for those brave men, who have so nobly fought our battles, and, by the blessing of our GOD, delivered us from our foes?—and do we feel no affection, or are we ashamed of expressing

expressing our love, to that kind IMMANUEL, who hath suffered so much and bled so freely for our Salvation; who hath delivered us, (if we do indeed belong to HIM,) from sin in this world and eternal sorrow in the next; who hath plucked us from the brink of hell, and won for us all the glories of heaven? Shall we cleave to HIS enemies, and nourish those, who murdered him? O shame! shame! Surely this is not the spirit of a CHRISTIAN; surely, this is not the treatment, which our LORD deserves. If we are the true and faithful soldiers of JESUS CHRIST, we shall entertain so generous a friendship for our divine leader, that we shall esteem HIS friends and foes our own; we shall own no interest separate from HIS; we shall cheerfully take the field at HIS command, follow HIM in every hardship and in every danger, and determine to stand or fall, to live or die together. "HIS banner is love;" and wherever we see it raised, we shall fly to it with the lightning's speed, vindicate our insulted Sovereign's honour at the hazard of our lives, and crucify that world and those sins, which crucified HIM. Indeed, these are enemies, on whose destruction our own existence depends; we must not, cannot speak to them of peace; we must not even hold a parley with them. It must be a war unto death. We must either kill our enemy,

enemy, or our enemy will assuredly kill us. Not a moment should we suspend hostilities; but ever have our armour on, and either strike, or ward, a blow. All other enemies we may be reconciled to, we may pity, we may love: but these are enemies, whom we must pursue with increasing rancour every day, and encounter with unabated ardor, till our life is ended, and "our warfare is accomplished:" enemies, whom it is guilt to give quarter to, to pity, or to spare. O! did we but love GOD in any measure suitable to HIS great love to us, and hate the Devil with half the hatred we often manifest towards a frail, offending brother, we should discharge the great duties of our high and honourable calling much better than we do, and act in a manner more agreeable to the profession we have embraced.

For the express purpose of rousing us to this holy combat, of preparing us for this necessary and important battle against our SPIRITUAL enemies, the LORD hath armed our EARTHLY foes against us. To chastise us for our past offences, and make us more wary and circumspect, more faithful and godly for the time to come, FRANCE hath thus long been permitted to distress and to alarm us. O! could we conquer our sins, we should easily conquer HER. We should prove to all the world, how easy it is for one saint to vanquish a thousand sinners,

sinners, and for England, at peace with GOD through the reconciling blood of JESUS, to subdue all the confederate powers, that are in arms against her. Secure under the shadow of GOD's almighty wings, we might return to FRANCE the answer, which the Prophet returned to Israel's insulting foe.* "The virgin, the daughter of Zion hath despised thee and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee." "Talk no more so exceeding proudly;" no longer boast of thy former conquests and power. "Hast thou not heard long ago, how that it is the LORD who hath done it," who hath strengthened "thine hands to war and thy fingers to fight," "and brought it to pass, that thou shouldest be to lay waste defenced cities into ruinous heaps? THEREFORE were their inhabitants of small power; they were dismayed and confounded." Because of their superstition and idolatry, their iniquity and sin, hath the LORD given the Nations, whom thou hast already conquered, into thine hands. They deserved punishment, and HE raised thee up to inflict it upon them — ENGLAND too, by HIS appointment, hath felt thy scourge: but she hath wisely repented of her iniquities and forsaken her sins. Thy work, then, is accomplished; and thy further attempts against her are so many rebellions against HIM. Wherefore "HE shall put his hook in thy nose and his bridle in thy lips, and shall

* Isaiah 27. xxii.

shall turn thee back by the way, by which thou camest — by the way thou camest, by the same shalt thou return, and shalt not come into this land. For HE shall defend this land to save it, for his own sake," for the sake of his religion, his saints, and his anointed servant, our King."

But how shall we, poor worms of the earth, maintain the unequal combat not only "with flesh and blood," with the corrupt passions, which war in our members, and the sensual, worldly affections, which arise in our hearts, "but with principalities, with powers, with the rulers of the darkness of this world, with spiritual wickedness in high places"? Who will strengthen us in the hour of battle? — who will give us the victory over these mighty, these formidable Foes? Hear what the text saith; "It is the LORD, who giveth salvation and victory unto Kings, and saveth David His Servant from the hurtful sword." Let the Saints of GOD apply this saying to themselves; for, to them it eminently belongs. When the LORD speaketh of Kings, HE speaketh of THEM, as well as of the sceptered Sovereigns of the earth; and David's blessings may be expected by all, who imitate David's piety and faith. HE, who is "the Prince of the Kings of the earth, hath made us KINGS," saith Saint John: * and, saith Saint Peter, † "Ye," O CHRISTI-
B ANS,

* Rev. i. vi.

† 1 Peter, 2. ix.

ANS, "are a ROYAL Priesthood." Thrones are prepared for you in heaven; and so certain are ye of sitting on them in majesty and glory, that ye may even now anticipate the event, and assume the royal title while ye tarry here below. And, doth not the text say well, when it saith, that "it is the LORD alone that giveth salvation unto THESE his Kings, and that delivereth THESE his anointed servants from sin and satan's hurtful sword?" Is it not true in a spiritual, as well as in a literal sense, that, although "the horse is prepared against the day of battle, yet safety, salvation, and victory are only of the LORD?" Hear what the Gospel saith; "this is the VICTORY, that overcometh the world," and we may add, this is the VICTORY, that overcometh the flesh and the devil too, "even our faith." But, saith another scripture, "faith is not your own, it is the gift of GOD." And, "without ME," saith CHRIST, "ye can do nothing;" ye can neither act, nor speak, nor think aright. Whenever, therefore any spiritual adversary from without invades our souls, or our own turbulent passions, as so many rebellious subjects, rise against us, and kindle the flames of war within our breasts; let us "look to the everlasting hills, from whence cometh our help," and say with pious David, "I will not trust in my bow, it is not my sword that shall save me;" to no created being will I look
for

for protection, neither will I depend upon my own strength for VICTORY; "but it is THOU, O LORD," and THOU alone, "that savest us from our enemies, and puttest" even the devils "to shame, that hate" and oppose both "us" and THEE.

Thus "going forth in the strength of the LORD GOD, and making mention of his righteousness, even of his only," we need "not fear what men," or devils "can do unto us"—for the LORD will fight on our side, and give us the VICTORY over our crafty and malicious foe. Lo! This is a "salvation," this is a VICTORY, worthy the ambition of a "King;" a VICTORY, which will secure our immortal happiness, and raise us to the highest conceivable summit of glory; to glory, that shall never be tarnished, and to a happiness, that shall never come to an end. He, that thus conquers is a conqueror indeed: he, that thus triumphs, will triumph for ever. "Better" and more glorious "is he, who" hath grace given him to "rule his own spirit, than he that taketh a city," and he that hath dominion over his own deceitful heart, than he who obtains the dominion of the whole world. The thrones of the mighty Kings must one day or other fall, and the world itself, with all its treasures, and all its honours, be destroyed: but he, who conquers sin
and

and SATAN, triumphs over DEATH itself, and lives for ever. He gains an empire boundless in extent, and eternal in duration; and wins a crown, as far surpassing any earthly diadem in lustre, as the feeble light of the glow-worm is surpassed by the splendour and effulgence of the unclouded meridian sun. O; may our ‘, King” have THIS “salvation” granted him, and he will have cause to rejoice indeed. The day will THEN come, when, with a triumph infinitely more glorious, and devotion more ardent and pure, than he has this day entered GOD’s temple on earth, he will enter “a temple, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;” and THERE, amidst thousands and ten thousands of Angels and Archangels, of Cherubim and Seraphim, fall down before the everlasting throne, and praise and magnify his great and gracious “LORD, who hath given him the VICTORY over such deadly foes, and delivered” his soul from destruction. and O! may the same precious “salvation” visit also us; that we, with him, may employ ourselves to all eternity in the sweet duties of praise and thanksgiving, and make the high arches of heaven ring and re-echo with hallelujahs to our GOD.

O good and gracious GOD, continue to “give salvation and VICTORY to our King, and deliver us, THY servants,” as hitherto THOU hast
done,

done, "from the hurtful sword," Save us, we beseech THEE, from our EARTHLY enemies, who talk so proudly, and meditate such terrible things against us. But above all, save us from our SPIRITUAL foes, the WORLD, the FLESH, and the DEVIL — save us from OURSELVES. To THEE alone we look for help; on THEE alone rely for "salvation." For, "THINE, O LORD, THINE is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the VICTORY, and the majesty." In THINE hand alone it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. Unto THEE, therefore, O holy FATHER, with the SON of THY love, and the SPIRIT of grace may our pious vows and fervent prayers in every difficulty and in every danger continually ascend; and unto THEE in every deliverance and every victory may we ascribe, as is most due, all blessing and honour, glory and power, thanksgiving and praise, now and for evermore. *Amen, and Amen.*

FINIS.

done, "from the hundred two." Save the
 respect THINE, from our early country who
 the to ground, and meadows, and the
 giving us, the above of, the
 ritual, the, the words, the, the
 all — have as from over the. To
 we look for, on THE, the
 action, the, the, the, the
 is the ground, and the, the
 and the, the, the, the
 THINE, the, the, the, the
 give, the, the, the, the
 O, the, the, the, the
 and the, the, the, the
 for, the, the, the, the
 danger, the, the, the, the
 every, the, the, the, the
 which, the, the, the, the

7 JU 66